

NSC BRIEFING

18 July 1956

NEAR EAST DEVELOPMENTS

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On 11 July, Egypt announced that Col. Mustafa Hafez, chief of the "Palestine Liberation Army," had been killed in the Gaza Strip by a "mine explosion".

A. The name of Hafez

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[redacted] had become a household word in Israel as chief of the "fedayeen" terrorists. His death was immediately proclaimed in the Israeli press.

B. On 15 July, Egypt's Middle East News Agency reversed its original announcement and declared that Hafez had been killed by a bomb sent through the mail, but provided no other details.

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3. On 14 July, Col. Salah Mustafa, the Egyptian military attache in Jordan, was also critically injured by a mail-bomb.

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4. Egypt, Jordan and Syria have attributed both explosions to Israeli military intelligence, recalling that "parcel post bombs" were employed successfully in the past against the British by Israeli terrorist groups.

A. Whether or not Israel is responsible for the bombings, there will be pressure for retaliatory blows at Israel by Egypt and Jordan.

5. Meanwhile a contest for control is shaping up between anti-leftist and leftist elements in Syria. It is also a contest between Iraq and Egypt. Civilian and military groups, inside and outside Syria, are engaged in plotting coups or countercoups. The situation remains highly fluid.

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